



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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### INTERIOR AND ARMY AGREE TO PLAN TO IMPROVE WATERFOWL HABITAT

The potential for conservation and improvement of thousands of acres of wetlands managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers throughout the United States will be advanced under a new agreement between the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of the Army.

The two Federal agencies have signed a formal pledge to work together to conserve wetlands on the more than 9 million acres managed by the Corps. The properties include wetlands in navigation and flood control projects, many of which are important waterfowl habitat. Under the agreement, the Corps and the Service will cooperate in studying additional opportunities for wetland management at the project level.

The effort is in support of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a project in the United States and Canada to reverse the decline of wetlands and waterfowl. The Service's National Wetlands Inventory Office currently estimates the annual loss of wetlands to be approximately 458,000 acres, mainly because of development. President Bush has said he wants "no net loss" of those resources in the future. Wetlands are essential

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not only for ducks and other wildlife but also for the storage and cleansing of water supplies in many areas.

The Governments of the United States and Canada, states and provinces, and private conservation groups are cooperating in the continent-wide project. U.S. Federal participation in the effort is directed by the Service's North American Waterfowl Management Plan Office. The campaign's goal to protect and enhance 6 million more acres of wetlands by the year 2000. Less than half of the 215 million acres of wetlands that existed in the United States before Europeans arrived remain today.

The cooperative agreement was signed by John S. Doyle, Jr., Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, and Becky Norton Dunlop, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. Other Federal land management agencies that previously agreed to support the plan are the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"This agreement is another step forward in our efforts to conserve wetlands and reverse the decline of America's waterfowl," said Assistant Secretary Dunlop.

"We are pleased," said Doyle, "that the Army Civil Works Program can provide opportunities to advance this important goal of the North American Plan."

A major provision of the agreement is that the Corps and the Service will exchange information outlining civil works projects within the boundaries of the North American Plan's six joint ventures, located from coast to coast. The Corps will describe current waterfowl management activities, seasonal waterfowl use, and the potential for increasing benefits to wildlife. The Service will brief the Corps on national, regional, and local objectives and identify opportunities for improvements.

After this information is shared, the two agencies will determine how Plan activities and goals relate to present and future Corps projects. Objectives of the plan will be considered in the conception, engineering, design, and construction phases of Corps civil works projects. The agreement is effective for 3 years, subject to renewal and modification.